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Burning the trees which are to be made into the gongs.

In giving this account, my informant had in mind a Gong-Raising rite of the finest order, in which four different kinds of upright slit gong are erected. The four trees of the kind called *mes-mes* suitable for gongs having been selected, the next stage in the proceedings is for the Maki-men and members of the introducing "line" to go over to the mainland and to kill them by setting them alight.[1] For this purpose, the men of the introducing "line" pile faggots round their bases, but do not set fire to them. For this important act it is necessary to procure the services of an expert magician called *mara man*[2] (who may, so far as I know, belong to any "line") who, while setting them alight, sings to himself a secret song to chase away ghosts. On returning to the Small Island, a pig is sacrificed and the sacrificial signal (*asaren*, from the verb *asar*) is sounded on the old gongs. Magicians never work for nothing, and this one is undoubtedly paid, but I have no record in this case as to what number or grade of pig he receives. The day's proceedings end with a feast of the kind called *tamean*, provided for the men of the introducing "line" in reward for their labours and held in the *ghamal*, shared also by the Maki-men who are their hosts and whose wives have spent the day preparing it.

Year's interval, while trees dry.

The burning of the trees is followed by a year's interval, to let the sap that can no longer rise die down and the still standing trunks dry off.

Felling the trees.

When the year has elapsed, the first really hard work takes place, when all the men of the home-village go over to the mainland, and those belonging to the introducing "line" cut down the trees. This will probably be done on different days for each tree, and it will be remembered that before the arrival of the white man the work had to be done with stone tools. The scene is, however, very far from being one of pure drudgery, for while the members of the introducing "line" work, the Maki-men sing and dance round them the circular *Gong-Raising* dance, making the forest ring with their harmonious high-pitched voices interspersed with shouts.[3]

As this is but the beginning of the work of preparing the logs, no pig

[1] The proceedings for the manufacture of gongs is very similar to that for the manufacture of canoes, both being made from the trunks of forest trees, but in this respect they differ, since trees for canoes are not burnt.

[2] *Mara* = man, and *man* = magic.

[3] It will be noted, by referring to the account of the *Gong-Raising* dance given on p. 326, that the relative positions of workers and Maki-men are the same as those of the introducers and Maki-men during the all-night dance. The tree trunk, though still standing, is thus regarded as though it were a gong, and is in fact already referred to at this stage as *na-mbe*, "gong."

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over to the Small Island, so now, after being assisted by them in hauling the logs up to the dancing-ground, the men of the home-village alone (presumably those of the introducing "line") drag them up, towards the end of the day, into the *ghamal* where the work of hollowing them out takes place.

Rites accompanying the Construction of the Gongs

Behak. Expert marks position for the slit.

Once safely lodged in the *ghamal*, a day is appointed, five or six days ahead, for a rite called *behak*, when an expert magician [1] marks out on each log the exact length and position of the slit through which it is to be hollowed out, and which, when finished, will form the two "lips" of the gong.

On this day the owners of the future gongs cut down branches of the nettle-plant called *ro-kalat* and place them under both ends of each log. This is to facilitate the hollowing out of the gongs, as, the wood of the nettle being very soft, it will sympathetically affect the wood of the gongs; if the logs were to rest on hardwood props they would be correspondingly hard to cut.

This having been done, the expert comes to mark on them the position of the slit. For this purpose he brings with him a pliable creeper of a kind called *piriov*, from which the slit takes its name, and with it measures the circumference of the trunk. Having cut down the creeper so that the two ends meet exactly round the log, he then takes it away and places it alongside a stick of native sugar-cane (*na-tōv*), which he also cuts so as to be equal in length to the creeper. Then he places both creeper and sugar-cane longitudinally along the surface of the log, and at either end of them lays transversely a twig of scented herb (*hokuri*) of a special kind called *tana ker-keriel*. Then he takes a shell adze of the kind called *tale*,[2] and with it delivers a succession of blows on the whole length of the sugar-cane, the expelled juice of which leaves a mark on the surface of the log. Finally, removing the sugar-cane and creeper, he chips along this mark with his adze just sufficiently to indicate the position of the slit to those who are going to hollow out the trunk.

While performing these acts, the magician sings special incantations in a low voice so that those watching him may not hear.

I was told that the creeper has no magical properties, being used only for convenience, but that both sugar-cane and herb are invested with magical import (*na-man*). One special property of the native sugar-cane is its red colour.

[1] Called *mara man* (see p. 349).

[2] Connected with the Atchin *tal-tali*, meaning "hard." Atchin has *tala* and *til-til* for the two chief kinds of shell adze (see Layard, 1, Nos. 94-96, 103, 105, 276).

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The practical result of the performance, probably based on an acoustic principle that is beyond the range of my own knowledge, is that the length of the slit is made equal to the exterior circumference of the gong.

A fowl is killed and given, together with a live pig, as payment to the magician, and tidings are sent round to all the Vao villages announcing what has been done, the messengers taking with them to each village a message-yam decorated with croton leaves together with a single killed pig for which, being for food only, no sacrificial signal is sounded. This pig is called *masoamp*, a word of which I did not enquire the exact meaning, but is probably compounded from *mas*, meaning "provisions," and *oamp*, which, when applied in the form of *tamat-oamp* to the ghosts of men slain in battle, indicates absence of mortuary rites, in this case represented by the absence of the sacrificial signal. This pig is probably made the occasion of a *masean* feast, being one for which the recipients have previously worked.

Skilled gong-makers hollow out the gongs, which are surrounded by a screen.

Skilled workers are now called for to assist in hollowing out the gongs. I will call them the gong-makers. These may be taken from any village and from either "line." Usually those who have previously worked at successful gongs are chosen.

A screen, called *na-lit*, is built inside the *ghamal*, and no one may enter it except those who are working on the gongs. Once the work has been started it must not be discontinued from sunrise to sundown, and to maintain this standard the workers are organised into shifts. When any one shift gets tired the workers composing it come out from behind the screen into the *ghamal* while the next shift takes up the uninterrupted work. While resting, the gong-makers are supplied with magnificent puddings. Not until nightfall may the work cease, and it must be resumed again before sunrise on the following morning. From the time the work is begun until the gongs are finished none of the workers may leave the *ghamal*, except only to relieve nature.

Restrictions imposed during hollowing out.

During this time no person of the home-village, man or woman, may have any sexual connexion, nor may they step over the buttress root of a *gha-tambol* tree, nor drink water, nor may they eat fish, nor the fruit of the *tawò* tree, nor anything that is roasted on stones. If yams are to be roasted the greatest care must be taken that there are no stones in the place where the fire is made. At the beginning of this period the list of these restrictions is publicly announced by the magician. All those subject to them are said to be *velval*, a word meaning "sacred" or "taboo." [1]

[1] See p. 400.

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CHAPTER XXIV

MAGIC

I WAS not long enough on Vao to go at all deeply into the question of what is commonly called magic. This will be treated more fully in a future volume on Atchin, where I recorded a number of cases in some detail. As the subject is of no little importance, however, with regard not only to Small Island culture but also to an understanding of the psychic forces still under control by primitive people, I propose in this chapter, after first giving a brief record of the few cases that came under my notice on Vao, to draw to some extent on my knowledge of magic among neighbouring communities, to discuss one or two outstanding features common to the magic of all the Small Islands.

In the Small Islands of Vao and Atchin magic and medicine are both called by the same name, namely *man*; in Vao usually combined with the indefinite article *ne* as *ne-man*, and in Atchin with *ni* to form *ni-man*. Philologically this is the same word as the Banks Islands *mana*, both being derived from the Indonesian *manang*, meaning "power."[1] Whatever may be its significance elsewhere, in the Small Islands the word has an extremely wide meaning, embracing powers which, according to our way of thinking, are both occult through their connexion with dreams and ghosts on the one hand and with unspecified magical forces on the other, and practical through knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs. This power may be used either for good (as in healing the sick) or for evil (as in sorcery), and either in the interest of private individuals (as in love magic) or of public welfare or disaster (as in weather magic).

The word *man* in all cases implies the possession both of psychic power and of knowledge of the appropriate ritual acts and incantations, and, in the case of many "cures," of the appropriate physical remedy as well. The same word is also applied to the magical or curative process itself. Thus, any item of magical procedure may be called *ne-man*, be this a method of divining on important occasions or simply a cure for toothache. Nor are its practitioners confined to a single sex. Thus, we have already seen how midwives are called *vene na man*, or "women with power (or knowledge),"[2] and the whole of weather magic is said to have been

[1] For the linguistic history of this word s… 2. The Small Islands *man* used in this sense is quite distinct from the other …ning "bird," derived from the Indonesian *manuk*.

[2] See p. 173.

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founded by a woman.[1] But more usually the practitioner is a man, called *mara man*,[2] meaning "man of power," or, if we translate *man* as "magic," then literally "magician." We have already seen such an expert magician at work in the making of upright slit gongs.[3] We have seen also the prominent rôle played by a special type of magician called *na-wogh* in charming each Maki-man during the period of feverish activity leading up to the great sacrifice in order to assist them in collecting the correct number of sacrificial boars.[4] Yet another specialist, this time called *mara kur*, is called in to perform, with magic rites, the delicate task of exactly placing the outrigger booms on the hull of a new sea-going canoe,[5] and later to ensure fertility in pigs and successful trading by placing a sow, with due rites, in the bow.[6] At death yet another magician presents charmed leaves to those who have buried the corpse in order that they may purify themselves by washing with these leaves in the sea.[7]

These are but a few instances of the immense variety of magical rites practised by individuals in the interests of the community. Innumerable other rites exist, covering almost every aspect of life, ranging from those of public utility to those applicable only to individuals, and it is safe to say that there is *no* adult member of the community unacquainted with some form of magic which he performs on occasion either for his own benefit or for that of others, in return for a fee commensurate with the importance of his act.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SOME MAGICAL ACTS

I have unfortunately no detailed information of how, in the cases cited above, the magicians set about their work. I have, however, a few details from Vao regarding (1) the appeal to ancestral and other ghosts in case of sickness, (2) other cures, and (3) weather magic.

(1) Appeal to Ancestral and Other Ghosts in Case of Sickness

This needs the assistance of a diviner to find out what ghost it is that is causing the sickness.

As we have seen, the only kind of death that is considered as being due to what we should consider "natural" causes is that of an old man who dies in the fulness of time without visible disease. In such a case it is recognised that there is nothing that can be done to prolong life. He duly settles his affairs, as described on p. 536, and his kinsmen's

[1] See pp. 633-4.

[2] Compare Banks Islands and Maewo *gismana*, Santa Cruz *mendeka*, Florida *mane kisu* and *mane nggeha vigona*, all meaning "magician" (Codrington, 3, pp. 195-201).

[3] See pp. 354 ff. [4] See pp. 379, 422. [5] See p. 466.

[6] See p. 467. [7] See p. 560.